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Interview with Yessica Gonzalez Rodriguez

Yessica Gonzalez Rodriguez

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Interviewee: Yessica Gonzalez

Interviewers: Peyton Huck, Charles Scrivner

Date: 10 December 2020

Location: Zoom

Collection: Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive, SBS 112: Women and Social Change, From 1890s to the Present, Fall 2020

Length: 00:31:15

Overseen by: Dr. Chrissy Lau

Bio: Born in Nayarit, Mexico, Yessica Gonzalez is a queer, immigrant organizer who serves as a consultant for the TransLatin@ Coalition and a sewer for the Auntie Sewing Squad. Growing up in a low-income household, sewing served as a creative outlet for Yessica to self-determine their gender expression and navigate their teenage years. This skill would ultimately serve Yessica well in the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, during which Yessica now sews masks for underprivileged communities as part of the Auntie Sewing Squad.

Thematic Outline:(00:00:00) After introductions, Yessica Gonzalez describes the objectives and projects of the Auntie Sewing Squad as well as their role within the organization. (00:02:00) They then go on to describe how they became involved and what experiences they had with sewing prior to the pandemic. (00:08:16) Gonzalez describes the intergenerational value of sewing in their life and how sewing as a creative outlet helped them navigate their teenage years. (00:11:36) Building off of this idea, Gonzalez explores how sewing has allowed them to better self-determine their own gender expression and tailor clothing to their own needs. (00:19:06) Gonzalez then shifts to discussing their organizing efforts, both before and during the pandemic. (00:25:24) Finally, Gonzalez concludes the interview by addressing additional questions and providing contact information for those at home.

Yessica Gonzalez Oral History Transcript

1

00:00:03,580 --> 00:00:04,450

Charles (C): Hello, everyone.

2

00:00:04,450 --> 00:00:13,050

C: My name is Charles Scrivner, and I'm joined with my partner Peyton Huck today to interview Yessica Gonzalez, a sewer from the Auntie Sewing Squad.

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00:00:13,050 --> 00:00:17,680

C: Yessica, how are you doing today?

Yessica (Y): I'm doing good. Nice to meet you both.

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00:00:17,680 --> 00:00:26,920

C: Yeah, it's nice to meet you. We're here today to interview Yessica about their efforts within the Auntie Sewing Squad

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00:00:26,920 --> 00:00:35,230

C: and what the organization's role has been during the pandemic occurring in 2020.

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00:00:35,230 --> 00:00:40,450

C: So, Peyton, if you'd like to start us off.

Peyton (P): Of course.

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00:00:40,450 --> 00:00:47,080

P: So we just have 10 questions to ask you, the first question is for those at home.

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00:00:47,080 --> 00:00:54,330

P: Could you please describe the mission, operations, and the goals of the Auntie Sewing Squad for those who don't know about it?

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00:00:54,330 --> 00:01:05,690

Y: Yeah. So the Auntie Sewing Squad is a group of folks all around aunties, uncles and "unties".

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00:01:05,690 --> 00:01:11,030

Y: I don't even know what non binary aunties are called, even though I'm looped in there.

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00:01:11,030 --> 00:01:19,940

Y" I just say "unties". A group of sewers that came together at the beginning of the pandemic to sew masks,

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00:01:19,940 --> 00:01:25,700

Y: where - and provide resources where the government failed to step in.

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00:01:25,700 --> 00:01:34,700

Y: And so at the beginning of the pandemic, folks were sewing for hospitals, for organizations and nonprofits and different areas,

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00:01:34,700 --> 00:01:45,200

Y: for farm workers, for the native nations, and for different groups of folks who were left out or didn't access masks.

15

00:01:45,200 --> 00:01:51,710

Y: And so it's all volunteer-based, volunteer-run sewers across the country who come together.

16

00:01:51,710 --> 00:02:00,480

Y: To sew a bunch of masks and send them out. And this started in early March.

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00:02:00,480 --> 00:02:06,410

C: How did you personally find out about the Auntie Sewing Squad and get involved?

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00:02:06,410 --> 00:02:11,080

Y: Yes, well, I found out about the sewing squad about two days later,

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00:02:11,080 --> 00:02:19,840

Y: or I think two days after the sewing squad had launched because I started sewing masks for my family, for myself.

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00:02:19,840 --> 00:02:25,550

Y: And this was before the mass ordinance went in where everybody was supposed to wear masks,

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00:02:25,550 --> 00:02:31,690

Y: and as you all know, getting masks at the beginning were really difficult.

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00:02:31,690 --> 00:02:35,650

Y: So they were like either sold out everywhere or people were looking on Amazon.

23

00:02:35,650 --> 00:02:41,440

Y: And if you already didn't have one, which is like Amazon was like the last last resort,

24

00:02:41,440 --> 00:02:45,100

Y: and if you didn't already have one, it was near impossible to access one.

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00:02:45,100 --> 00:02:50,110

Y: And so this was right as the stay at home orders were still getting launched.

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00:02:50,110 --> 00:02:59,350

Y: And I remember my partner actually sent me a link and was like, hey, look, you know how to sew you learned how to sew when you were young.

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00:02:59,350 --> 00:03:04,450

Y: You have a sewing machine. Maybe you want to make this. And then, like, I just immediately got super invested.

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00:03:04,450 --> 00:03:13,600

Y: And shortly after one of my friends was doing a - what were they called? They were called like a- bags -

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00:03:13,600 --> 00:03:22,750

Y: survival bags for Skid Row residents in partnership with Los Angeles Community Action Network LACAN.

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00:03:22,750 --> 00:03:27,310

Y: And she was like, does anybody have masks? And I was like, well, I don't have any.

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00:03:27,310 --> 00:03:32,260

Y: But if you're okay with, like, sewn masks, then I'll hop in there and I'll make some.

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00:03:32,260 --> 00:03:37,120

Y: And like that day, I just spent making twenty. And then I was like, oh, my gosh.

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00:03:37,120 --> 00:03:41,320

Y: I'm like, I remember, like, really making them. I was like I got you on 20 because that was her request.

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00:03:41,320 --> 00:03:47,350

Y: And so on top of that, like getting materials to make masks was already really difficult.

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00:03:47,350 --> 00:03:52,900

Y: And so she was like, don't worry. There's also this other effort of people who are sewing.

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00:03:52,900 --> 00:03:56,350

Y: And at that time, it was like when people were barely starting to sew.

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00:03:56,350 --> 00:03:58,720

Y: And so she was like, let me just loop you in.

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00:03:58,720 --> 00:04:06,640

Y: And it was like two, three days after the sewing squad had started that I became involved in like just like resource sharing,

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00:04:06,640 --> 00:04:11,500

Y: sewing for the sewing squad and et cetera. And it's been history since then.

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00:04:11,500 --> 00:04:22,320

C: That's amazing that you drew from your sewing experience and stepped up to the plate to help provide for people even before hearing of the Auntie Sewing Squad.

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00:04:22,320 --> 00:04:32,050

Y: Yeah. Yeah, I think. Yeah. I'm like, "the sewing skills really came in handy."

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00:04:32,050 --> 00:04:32,820

P: Yes.

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00:04:32,820 --> 00:04:43,400

P: Thank you for going into, like not only were masks hard to get, but once people had a resource to the just getting the materials to make the ones like.

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00:04:43,400 --> 00:04:49,440

P: Masks were selling out and then fabric and then like string just just everything on top of one another.

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00:04:49,440 --> 00:04:55,210

P: So, yeah. You know, you couldn't buy them. Sure you can make them. But you couldn't even get that.

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00:04:55,210 --> 00:05:02,140

P: Right.

C: Oh, go ahead.

47

00:05:02,140 --> 00:05:08,740

C: Oh, sorry.

P: Oh, what did you have to say?

C: I was just going to go on to the next question.

48

00:05:08,740 --> 00:05:14,530

C: You touched upon your own experience in that description.

49

00:05:14,530 --> 00:05:22,450

C: What was your sewing experience like prior to joining the squad?

Y: So prior to joining the squad, I was,

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00:05:22,450 --> 00:05:27,070

Y: I learned to sew. I always watch my mom sew, so my mom always had a sewing machine.

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00:05:27,070 --> 00:05:30,190

Y: And so I had like I was very curious kid,

52

00:05:30,190 --> 00:05:38,020

Y: And so I would just sit there, watch her sew one, so very intergenerational for me, sewing, picking up a sewing machine.

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00:05:38,020 --> 00:05:44,320

Y: So that's, I think, the start. And I definitely messed up a couple, like her prized sewing machine.

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00:05:44,320 --> 00:05:47,590

Y: I remember one time it wasn't working, so like I tried to fix it.

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00:05:47,590 --> 00:05:56,290

Y: I didn't fix it whatsoever. But this was like the beginning of like middle, middle, mid, middle school,

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00:05:56,290 --> 00:06:06,700

Y: And in high school, ninth grade, I had switched into a new high school, which was like among peers that I didn't necessarily know.

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00:06:06,700 --> 00:06:11,380

Y: And so I took a fashion and design class.

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00:06:11,380 --> 00:06:16,120

Y: It was basically home ec. There was like nothing like this is the fashion aspect blah blah blah
blah blah.

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00:06:16,120 --> 00:06:20,920

Y: It was a home ec class that was called fashion and design or fashion and development.

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00:06:20,920 --> 00:06:27,640

Y: And so I learned a lot of my technical skills from that class in ninth grade, how to sew, how to
like,

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00:06:27,640 --> 00:06:37,630

Y: Sew a straight line, how to pick up a sewing machine, how to make sure that I know what I'm
doing, interfacing all of that and different techniques.

62

00:06:37,630 --> 00:06:41,920

Y: And so that's like my formal 101

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00:06:41,920 --> 00:06:49,240

Y: that I took in ninth grade and then sewing kind of stayed with me all throughout high school
since I was

64

00:06:49,240 --> 00:06:57,490

Y: like altering a lot of my clothes and adjusting what I was wearing or making different types of
things.

65

00:06:57,490 --> 00:07:04,840

Y: And so from that, I've sewn very briefly since then, since like two years after high school,

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00:07:04,840 --> 00:07:08,860

Y: mainly because I'm always super busy and I always tell myself, like I want to get back into it.

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00:07:08,860 --> 00:07:19,150

Y: I want to make more time for sewing. And so the pandemic definitely pushed me to like sew even when, like, I wasn't thinking about sewing.

68

00:07:19,150 --> 00:07:23,170

Y: And so that was another way that I was like, oh, yeah, you still have this skill.

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00:07:23,170 --> 00:07:27,310

Y: And like, we all have different parts to play in movement spaces.

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00:07:27,310 --> 00:07:34,570

Y: And sewing definitely came up where I was like, yeah, let's get this.

C: That's great.

71

00:07:34,570 --> 00:07:38,020

C: Who knew those courses would pay off in this way and down the road, right?

72

00:07:38,020 --> 00:07:44,710

Y: Yeah, I agree. A lot of my friends didn't even know I was like I knew how to sew.

73

00:07:44,710 --> 00:07:52,900

Y: So they were like, "you know how to sew." And then I was like, "yeah, I learned when I was younger" and they were like, "what?!" Definitely.

74

00:07:52,900 --> 00:07:59,280

Y: And so my friends were just like throwing their - who also have participated in the Auntie Sewing Squad

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00:07:59,280 --> 00:08:03,970

Y: And who were connected at the beginning when it was like all getting gathered and they were like here as long as you can

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00:08:03,970 --> 00:08:16,220

Y: sew here are like a bunch of tools and a bunch of resources. So that's also been really, really helpful too.

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00:08:16,220 --> 00:08:27,800

P: OK. And then the next question is do-do-do. What impact has sewing had on your life so far?

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00:08:27,800 --> 00:08:33,860

Y: Yeah, I feel like so like I said, sewing is very like intergenerational for me.

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00:08:33,860 --> 00:08:38,300

Y: I've seen my mom sew when she was- when I was younger, I've seen my auntie.

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00:08:38,300 --> 00:08:43,700

Y: sew. I've seen like my grandma or like I've heard of my grandma

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00:08:43,700 --> 00:08:47,960

Y: and so I know that it's something that has happened for many, many generations.

82

00:08:47,960 --> 00:08:53,750

Y: And so for me, I feel really privileged to be able to carry that on.

83

00:08:53,750 --> 00:08:57,470

Y: Right. And being like, yeah, I can make this or I can unmake this,

84

00:08:57,470 --> 00:09:06,890

Y: but I can also fix things that have been passed down from my family or I can look at something and remake it and redo re undo it.

85

00:09:06,890 --> 00:09:14,120

Y: But I think reflecting back on the beginning of a pandemic and like my relationship with the sewing machine are like, oh,

86

00:09:14,120 --> 00:09:21,980

Y: I learned a skill in high school and now sewing has become really particular in this time where I get

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00:09:21,980 --> 00:09:28,970

Y: to make things that are essentially lifesaving for my family and for like other people who I really,

88

00:09:28,970 --> 00:09:36,410

Y: really care about, for folks who I'm in relationship, for folks who my community with, for folks who I may not know but who I know.

89

00:09:36,410 --> 00:09:45,200

Y: this mask like this protective layer will make a difference. And so sewing has like I was just reflecting on all of that.

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00:09:45,200 --> 00:09:50,270

Y: I also made a "Zine" because we were learning a lot of new things about masks.

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00:09:50,270 --> 00:09:55,700

Y: Doing and undoing. And so a lot of my friends were always like, "hey, how do you do this?"

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00:09:55,700 --> 00:09:57,950

Y: And I was like, “wait, hold up. I can't tell you everything.”

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00:09:57,950 --> 00:10:06,530

Y: So along with my other friend, we just made a Zine on- on mask making and mutual aid effort.

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00:10:06,530 --> 00:10:11,960

Y: So other folks can pick up sewing at the beginning. And that was also really helpful.

95

00:10:11,960 --> 00:10:14,510

Y: So, yes, so through reflecting all of that,

96

00:10:14,510 --> 00:10:24,200

Y: I was really thinking about how sewing has really impacted a lot of my life, especially when I was in high school.

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00:10:24,200 --> 00:10:26,960

Y: I was like low income to no income in high school.

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00:10:26,960 --> 00:10:32,990

Y: And so a lot of the times when I would go through thrifting, I couldn't afford a lot of the clothes that were like “in.”

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00:10:32,990 --> 00:10:37,970

Y: I also had a very like punk, particular style.

100

00:10:37,970 --> 00:10:43,790

Y: I don't even know that I would call it punk, but it was like very alternative. It was very alternative.

101

00:10:43,790 --> 00:10:49,730

Y: And so sewing was very much like I could thrift something and I can make it very “in,” very vintagey.

102

00:10:49,730 --> 00:10:55,070

Y: I can make it to adjust to my body, which also was like, hella affirming.

103

00:10:55,070 --> 00:11:01,520

Y: When there is clothes, that doesn't always fit my body, then I can just grab whatever and like fit it to my

104

00:11:01,520 --> 00:11:05,900

Y: like adjust it, especially for me or for people around me.

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00:11:05,900 --> 00:11:12,710

Y: Skinny jeans were also a really big thing. And so I remember making my brothers bigger jeans that were cheaper into skinny jeans.

106

00:11:12,710 --> 00:11:16,640

Y: Right. Or like my own jeans, into skinny jeans, etc, etc.

107

00:11:16,640 --> 00:11:24,380

Y: And so yeah sewing really was like really an outlet for me to be able to, like, focus and get time to and like it-

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00:11:24,380 --> 00:11:27,950

Y: It still is really a full outlet for me to, like,

109

00:11:27,950 --> 00:11:36,250

Y: spend time with myself and think about and like really show like my own creativity that I really appreciate.

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00:11:36,250 --> 00:11:40,310

C: I know earlier that you mentioned you were non binary, correct?

Y: Yeah.

111

00:11:40,310 --> 00:11:45,290

C: So I know for me I'm non-binary as well, and it can be difficult to find clothing.

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00:11:45,290 --> 00:11:50,930

C: That's um - hey!.

Y: Hey! Hey baby.

113

00:11:50,930 --> 00:11:56,120

C: That's uh gender affirming and looks good and is also affordable.

114

00:11:56,120 --> 00:12:03,300

C: So would you say sewing has helped you navigate that and like explore your style and creativity?

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00:12:03,300 --> 00:12:11,700

Y: Absolutely. I think that like like I said, just sewing in general, like when I want to wear a button up, I have big hips, you know?

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00:12:11,700 --> 00:12:18,000

Y: And so just like trimming the sides or making it fit to my body, I'm also fat.

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00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:28,710

Y: So, like, making shit work and like for my body and adjust it to my body has been like sewing is like super crucial to that,

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00:12:28,710 --> 00:12:34,530

Y: especially when I want to make something like more fitting, like, for example, like crop tops.

119

00:12:34,530 --> 00:12:45,450

Y: Like if I want to buy something that like is like for me. But also pants in general, like I don't like really shop at any particular section.

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00:12:45,450 --> 00:12:50,520

Y: But if I'm like shopping at the quote unquote men's section that I want to adjust it to my waist, you know.

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00:12:50,520 --> 00:12:51,570

Y: And so and so.

122

00:12:51,570 --> 00:13:04,210

Y: So I think definitely like sewing has made such an affirming like has really helped me both affirm my gender and myself as a creative person.

123

00:13:04,210 --> 00:13:09,430

C: Prior to this interview, you mentioned you have a great deal of experience organizing and have even worked with the

124

00:13:09,430 --> 00:13:17,950

C: Is it pronounced TransLatin@ Coalition? How have these experiences impacted your own role within the Auntie Sewing Squad?

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00:13:17,950 --> 00:13:23,140

C: And led you to this point.

Y: Yeah, so I also also I want to say that,

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00:13:23,140 --> 00:13:26,590

Y: like I've participated in the Auntie Sewing Squad and that I've been like a

127

00:13:26,590 --> 00:13:30,820

Y: big part of it or like I have continuously been a part of the sewing squad.

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00:13:30,820 --> 00:13:35,320

Y: But there's like aunties who have been, like, out there sewing every single day.

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00:13:35,320 --> 00:13:41,440

Y: And I just want to highlight them and be like shout out to you because, like, they really make the world go round.

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00:13:41,440 --> 00:13:48,970

Y: Like, I log on to Facebook and I like pitch in my little masks as often as I can.

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00:13:48,970 --> 00:13:54,190

Y: And so for me, I'm just like, wow, like these aunties are just really fucking getting our shit-

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00:13:54,190 --> 00:14:01,900

Y: Sorry, just really getting everything, getting us together in the best way.

133

00:14:01,900 --> 00:14:03,100

Y: Right. That they can.

134

00:14:03,100 --> 00:14:11,820

Y: And so I really appreciate- and seeing a network of folks who are also older because it's also super intergenerational, the Auntie Sewing Squad.

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00:14:11,820 --> 00:14:22,270

Y: And that's been amazing to see how intergenerational it has been from like young kids programing for young kids to like elders,

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00:14:22,270 --> 00:14:31,480

Y: elder aunties and like really like sharing technique and being like, hey, you know, so just want to pause and give them a shout out.

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00:14:31,480 --> 00:14:37,060

Y: And I think the other part of it is that even though it's been super intergenerational,

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00:14:37,060 --> 00:14:41,650

Y: it's also been super active and socially aware of social issues.

139

00:14:41,650 --> 00:14:46,810

Y: And so for me, one of the things that I really want to highlight is when the uprisings were happening,

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00:14:46,810 --> 00:14:51,710

Y: I was like, as somebody who has done movement work and is also.

141

00:14:51,710 --> 00:14:57,710

Y: An organizer and super political analyst, just like, damn, is this going to be it for me in the sewing squad?

142

00:14:57,710 --> 00:15:04,040

Y: Because if somebody says something racist or like, you know, somebody says something problematic, I was like, oh, my gosh.

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00:15:04,040 --> 00:15:07,450

Y: But. Like, it proved me completely wrong.

144

00:15:07,450 --> 00:15:11,890

Y: We're like a lot of the aunties from all across the board were like, hey,

145

00:15:11,890 --> 00:15:16,450

Y: how are we showing up for black lives and how we're gonna show up for black people right now in this day?

146

00:15:16,450 --> 00:15:25,900

Y: And I was just like, damn, a political sewing group that is down to get it about mutual aid and put their mouth and the work where it's at.

147

00:15:25,900 --> 00:15:33,820

Y: I was just like, this is amazing. And I think it, like, recommitted me to continue making those pledges and making those sewings because on top of,

148

00:15:33,820 --> 00:15:42,400

Y: like, I dedicate a lot of time to solving at the beginning. And like now I'm like back to organizing full time and like, always here and there.

149

00:15:42,400 --> 00:15:53,260

Y: But I think that seeing so much like commitment to making our world a better place, as well as continuing to meet the needs of our people,

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00:15:53,260 --> 00:16:00,130

Y: I think that for me is like extra motivation to continue sewing that I really, really appreciate as well.

151

00:16:00,130 --> 00:16:06,470

C: That's amazing that, In the midst of all this social.

152

00:16:06,470 --> 00:16:12,780

C: I don't know what the correct word is, awakening, movements, uprisings.

153

00:16:12,780 --> 00:16:18,920

C: The squad has continued to push for inclusion and

154

00:16:18,920 --> 00:16:25,100

C: Stand for what's right. But this is kind of jumping ahead a little bit for Peyton

155

00:16:25,100 --> 00:16:34,160

C: That's at question eight but, Could you describe some of the specific efforts the squad has done to push for inclusion in these times?

156

00:16:34,160 --> 00:16:37,970

Y: Yeah for me (audio cut out)

P: sorry

157

00:16:37,970 --> 00:16:42,590

Y: No, you're good. There's like a really loud echo. Hello.

158

00:16:42,590 --> 00:16:51,990

Y: OK. It went away. Just making sure. Yeah, I think for me, like being a non binary using they/them.

159

00:16:51,990 --> 00:16:55,970

Y: Like, I didn't question, I was just like, oh, you know, like this is a collaboration.

160

00:16:55,970 --> 00:17:03,380

Y: I think that they've always been really good about respecting my pronouns, which is huge, especially as we're talking inner generationally right.

161

00:17:03,380 --> 00:17:11,000

Y: Like being like, oh, non binary aunties and like not necessarily or i'm like hey, I use them and they're like, oh, perfect.

162

00:17:11,000 --> 00:17:17,960

Y: Like, let me just switch it up real quick. We got you. So that has been really great inclusion.

163

00:17:17,960 --> 00:17:28,850

Y: I feel like just the broad campaigns that the masks have supported have also been super important.

164

00:17:28,850 --> 00:17:33,830

Y: Earlier in the summer, one of the organizations that received mask was a Trans Latino coalition.

165

00:17:33,830 --> 00:17:44,120

Y: Where I do my where I currently work, I am employed at and just I didn't know about it because they got in contact with me like our VP.

166

00:17:44,120 --> 00:17:48,620

Y: And all of a sudden they were like, yeah, I work for Trans Latino. And everybody was super excited.

167

00:17:48,620 --> 00:17:52,220

Y: And I was like, wait, I work there like what's going on here?

168

00:17:52,220 --> 00:18:02,750

Y: And then one of my coworkers who's also a non binary auntie it's funny, like that's a whole separate conversations on like other things,

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00:18:02,750 --> 00:18:11,090

Y: but we're both work at Trans Latina and have been sewing a lot and they were also like wait hold up.

170

00:18:11,090 --> 00:18:12,650

Y: When did this mask come in.

171

00:18:12,650 --> 00:18:22,250

Y: But it was really dope that to see like Trans Latina a translator organization that's like uplifting, like black indigenous people of color.

172

00:18:22,250 --> 00:18:28,460

Y: Trans Woman, trans folk, non binary folks of color and also getting masks.

173

00:18:28,460 --> 00:18:31,280

Y: I was like, wow, this is great. And like there was no prejudice there.

174

00:18:31,280 --> 00:18:37,700

Y: Like, you know, everybody was super uplifting and also people sewing for like folks uprising,

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00:18:37,700 --> 00:18:41,600

Y: injustices against injustice and police brutality like folks.

176

00:18:41,600 --> 00:18:45,110

Y: Would be like them to make some masks. I'm going to go drop them off. Yeah.

177

00:18:45,110 --> 00:18:51,620

Y: How many did you make? Yeah, i'm just going to go pass them out, you know. And I think that all of that is super.

178

00:18:51,620 --> 00:18:58,340

Y: I like appreciative of like how inclusive it is and like demonstrates that in general.

179

00:18:58,340 --> 00:19:06,480

Y: That's amazing. Peyton, do you want to ask the next question?

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00:19:06,480 --> 00:19:17,650

P: Yeah. So next question is, how is pandemic impacted your organizing your own organizing efforts?

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00:19:17,650 --> 00:19:23,830

Y: Oh, my gosh. I feel like in terms of my own organizing efforts and I I think I'm sure it's

182

00:19:23,830 --> 00:19:30,590

Y: similar for students where it's like because we're stuck to our computers now,

183

00:19:30,590 --> 00:19:37,390

Y: we're like more time. Right, than there's higher expectations of do work, of working.

184

00:19:37,390 --> 00:19:46,890

Y: Whereas just like hold up, we're still in a global pandemic. And so I think for me, a lot of the organizing has shifted.

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00:19:46,890 --> 00:19:59,290

Y: But at the same time has become more needed or like more like where you need to do more to catch up to, like, the current situations.

186

00:19:59,290 --> 00:20:05,410

Y: And so I'm just like navigating like try not to be burnt out organizing during this time,

187

00:20:05,410 --> 00:20:17,790

Y: as well as like making sure that the things that I really care about are also front and center in the work that I'm doing as well.

188

00:20:17,790 --> 00:20:21,440

Y: You mentioned that like for students, probably similar.

189

00:20:21,440 --> 00:20:25,760

C:: Yeah, definitely working at home. The workload is like increased exponentially.

190

00:20:25,760 --> 00:20:35,910

C: I don't know about you, Peyton, but we're also definitely trying to navigate balance and burnout with trying to.

191

00:20:35,910 --> 00:20:45,420

C: Increased productivity to deal with the pandemic. And, you know, balance everything during these crazy times.

192

00:20:45,420 --> 00:20:50,790

C: So speaking of the pandemic, hopefully this pandemic will be temporary,

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00:20:50,790 --> 00:20:57,460

C: but are there any plans to make the Auntie Sewing Squad a permanent organization?

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00:20:57,460 --> 00:21:09,100

Y: I have no idea.

C: Maybe that'll be a question for some of the other archives, maybe with Christina Wong.

195

00:21:09,100 --> 00:21:15,340

Y: Yes. Or like the aunties who are like there, shoutout to all of those core aunties

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00:21:15,340 --> 00:21:20,780

C: Yes. All right.

197

00:21:20,780 --> 00:21:29,030

C: Peyton do you want to ask the next one?

198

00:21:29,030 --> 00:21:38,650

P: How have Queer, Trans, and people of color, folk, folx, sorry, am I pronouncing that right, folx, found community with the Auntie Sewing Squad?

199

00:21:38,650 --> 00:21:45,790

P: Are there any areas where the organization could improve?

Y: Yeah, I don't know like improve.

200

00:21:45,790 --> 00:21:47,950

Y: I'm like, I don't know necessarily.

201

00:21:47,950 --> 00:21:56,560

Y: I like I said, like my engagement with the sewing squad is like I'm here, you know, and I've had a good experience in terms of it.

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00:21:56,560 --> 00:22:00,160

Y: So I think it's like rockin in my book.

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00:22:00,160 --> 00:22:08,470

Y: But in terms of QTPOC folks finding community in the sewing squad, I did want to highlight this because I'm just like,

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00:22:08,470 --> 00:22:16,630

Y: yay, like a lot of my friends ended up being in the sewing squad, which is no coincidence.

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00:22:16,630 --> 00:22:26,460

Y: And so aside from the Zine that I talked about earlier that we did, we ended up spending a lot of time.

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00:22:26,460 --> 00:22:34,030

Y: Like just together, like my coworker, we would be on the phone and be like, how are you sewing your masks now?

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00:22:34,030 --> 00:22:40,530

Y: How are you sewing your masks now, right? And I know that there was a designated time on the Auntie Sewing Squad.

208

00:22:40,530 --> 00:22:45,930

Y: But I think that there was a particular moment where a lot of us were just like grouping together.

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00:22:45,930 --> 00:22:50,780

Y: Like, we tend to like QTPOC folk, tend to just be like, how are you doing things?

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00:22:50,780 --> 00:22:59,370

Y: Let's just face time. Right. And then coming back to the Sewing Squad and then sharing our experiences like where we were at our pledges, et cetera, et cetera.

211

00:22:59,370 --> 00:23:12,120

Y: But I do think that in terms of creating closer bonds, that's been really helpful for other folks that like my other friend

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00:23:12,120 --> 00:23:24,000

Y: so my coworker and then my other friend, who was also, who is also an auntie, has been sewing and was sewing a lot of a lot like at the same time.

213

00:23:24,000 --> 00:23:29,710

Y: So we would stay up till like 3:00 a.m., 4:00 a.m., just sewing and talking and, like, sharing.

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00:23:29,710 --> 00:23:33,210

Y: Take me. Oh, how are you doing? How are you? How are your videos? Right.

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00:23:33,210 --> 00:23:38,640

Y: Like sharing back and forth video. So I think that's that helped a lot of us get a lot a lot closer.

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00:23:38,640 --> 00:23:43,710

Y: But it was definitely like it never felt like I was doing it alone.

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00:23:43,710 --> 00:23:48,810

Y: Especially when, you know, sometimes through harsh moments.

218

00:23:48,810 --> 00:23:53,580

Y: We build relations, stronger relationships with people who are already in community with.

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00:23:53,580 --> 00:24:00,820

Y: And so I think making pledges through the Auntie Sewing Squad definitely solidified a lot of my relationships with QTPOC folks,

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00:24:00,820 --> 00:24:05,700

Y: either even through like extreme like fabric exchange. Material exchange.

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00:24:05,700 --> 00:24:09,210

Y: Right. And like running across Los Angeles County.

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00:24:09,210 --> 00:24:16,710

Y: Woah, there was a time that feels like a lifetime ago running through L.A. County, trying to pick up materials, cloth materials and so forth.

223

00:24:16,710 --> 00:24:23,250

Y: I think that that definitely solidified it because I never felt like I was doing it alone, which is also super duper helpful.

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00:24:23,250 --> 00:24:31,710

Y: And I really appreciate it. Appreciative of, and also how like us how it has continue to like uplift and like support.

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00:24:31,710 --> 00:24:34,980

C: That's amazing

Y: And I just. Yeah. And my other friend hold up.

226

00:24:34,980 --> 00:24:40,230

Y: I need to give my other friend, Audrey, shout out for baking bread for the Auntie Sewing Squad.

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00:24:40,230 --> 00:24:45,790

Y: That's it.

C: That's awesome. It's cool that like. The roles that like

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00:24:45,790 --> 00:24:52,080

C: I was just thinking of what you just said, the baking bread that I am proud that members don't always have to sew

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00:24:52,080 --> 00:25:01,440

C: So like, they can contribute in other ways like providing food or, you know, delivering materials or whatever the case may be.

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00:25:01,440 --> 00:25:07,860

C: And it's also amazing that like career people so often find community within each other and

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00:25:07,860 --> 00:25:11,880

C: sort of like a really common term they find chosen family among themselves.

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00:25:11,880 --> 00:25:24,150

C: So it's great that the Auntie Sewing Squad can be a resource for or solidify what was already relationships that we're many developing.

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00:25:24,150 --> 00:25:30,950

Y: I Agree

C: So we have a little bit of time left.

234

00:25:30,950 --> 00:25:36,200

C: I wanted to go into some questions, that sprang up throughout the interview.

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00:25:36,200 --> 00:25:44,330

C: So you mentioned about is it pronounced a “Zine” like you're sewing tutorial that you made of the

Y: A Zine?

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00:25:44,330 --> 00:25:53,090

C: A Zine, yeah how do you pronounce?

Y: A Zine, Yeah.

C: Listeners or readers find that if they wanted to learn how to sew a mask?

237

00:25:53,090 --> 00:25:58,320

C: Is it public

Y: Yeah, it's on Google doc. I don't know

238

00:25:58,320 --> 00:26:03,700

Y: I don't remember that there's a Bitly [link]. It's published on Columbia.

239

00:26:03,700 --> 00:26:09,580

Y: archive.

C: Ok

Y: Let me see? Let me remember what it's called.

240

00:26:09,580 --> 00:26:14,870

Y: I should pull it up. It's called for, huh?

241

00:26:14,870 --> 00:26:20,530

P: Yeah, I've never heard of a Zine before, so I'm curious.

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00:26:20,530 --> 00:26:26,410

It's like wearing a WSA or do you want to know, like a Xena's?

243

00:26:26,410 --> 00:26:31,960

Y: Oh a Zine? It's like very or do you want to know what like a Zine is?

P: Or like a, sure or like how other could be able to find it

244

00:26:31,960 --> 00:26:37,770

Y: Yeah let me see. The Zine is called.

245

00:26:37,770 --> 00:26:42,600

Y: It's been so long since is since I've seen it. It's called "A Mask is Better Than No Mask and

246

00:26:42,600 --> 00:26:48,320

Y: All We Have is Each Other, a Guide to Creating Fabric Masks."

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00:26:48,320 --> 00:26:54,540

Y: And if I believe if you find Google that on, just search it.

248

00:26:54,540 --> 00:26:57,360

Y: "All We Have is Each Other, a Guide to Creating Fabric Masks."

249

00:26:57,360 --> 00:27:08,430

Y: It should pop up, as I know, that ended up getting published on some university Web sites so you can find it there.

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00:27:08,430 --> 00:27:17,160

Y: But a Zine is basically super grass roots version of a pamphlet or a book.

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00:27:17,160 --> 00:27:25,260

Y: A lot of anarchist communities use it and it's like basically pieces of different things that come together and create and make a resource.

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00:27:25,260 --> 00:27:29,220

Y: And so that was one of the things that we made it into.

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00:27:29,220 --> 00:27:33,990

Y: And that one came out at the beginning of April.

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00:27:33,990 --> 00:27:39,630

Y: April 1st. So.

P: Cool, thank you.

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00:27:39,630 --> 00:27:47,930

Y: You're welcome.

C: Another question that sprang to mind is that throughout the interview you mentioned you work for the Trans Latina Coalition

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00:27:47,930 --> 00:27:52,080

C: what specific roles do you fulfill.

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00:27:52,080 --> 00:28:00,500

C: And what do they translate to your position and the Auntie Sewing Squad as well?

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00:28:00,500 --> 00:28:12,670

Y: Yeah, so Trans Latina when I came in and during this time was a fellow I or I was doing the fellowship during that time, a Soros Justice Fellowship.

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00:28:12,670 --> 00:28:22,980

Y: And so. I was it did not translate, and I very much sometimes do my organizing were a little bit separate,

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00:28:22,980 --> 00:28:28,910

Y: but the great thing was that because it was a pandemic and it was like.

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00:28:28,910 --> 00:28:35,660

Y: Or like because it like a lot of. Well, let me rephrase that, because a lot of our circumstances shifted.

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00:28:35,660 --> 00:28:45,890

Y: My fellowship also had a little bit of leeway of shift where the things that I was needing to do were a little bit more flexible.

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00:28:45,890 --> 00:28:52,670

Y: Right. Because a lot of like my reality of my project had changed overnight.

264

00:28:52,670 --> 00:29:01,730

Y: And so that gave me flexibility also, chill for a moment and then currently at the Trans Latina Coalition I'm the communications coordinator.

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00:29:01,730 --> 00:29:09,260

Y: And that started at the beginning of last week. November mid-November.

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00:29:09,260 --> 00:29:11,940

Y: But during at the beginning of a pandemic.

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00:29:11,940 --> 00:29:20,980

Y: And up until November mid-November, earlier side of it, I was a fellow and I was doing part of my fellowship.

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00:29:20,980 --> 00:29:29,080

Y: At the Trans Latina Coalition doing comms and supporting trans people who are in immigration detention as well.

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00:29:29,080 --> 00:29:35,270

Y: And so it didn't really interact, but there was like a leeway there to be able to sew.

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00:29:35,270 --> 00:29:43,450

C: Right. So. Hopefully, like I mentioned earlier, this pandemic will be temporary.

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00:29:43,450 --> 00:29:51,880

C: And by the time someone accesses this oral history archive there, there won't be a need for the Auntie Sewing Squad.

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00:29:51,880 --> 00:30:03,640

C: But if there is where can the listeners or readers find the organization and are there any is the organization looking for any donations or volunteers?

273

00:30:03,640 --> 00:30:08,090

C: And where can people go to provide those?

274

00:30:08,090 --> 00:30:14,630

Y: Yeah. You want to know about the Auntie Sewing Squad, you can find Auntie Sewing on Instagram.

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00:30:14,630 --> 00:30:19,450

Y: You can find the like page on Facebook and the like.

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00:30:19,450 --> 00:30:23,870

Y: should also have a donation button on both of them where you can donate resources.

277

00:30:23,870 --> 00:30:30,620

Y: If you don't know how to sew, you can always donate money or the sewing squad is always doing drives.

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00:30:30,620 --> 00:30:38,270

Y: I have no idea how you become a member now, but there's a list of aunties who are very, very,

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00:30:38,270 --> 00:30:47,660

Y: very good at filtering how to become a member and how to be part of the sewing squad, which is also amazing as well.

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00:30:47,660 --> 00:30:53,920

Y: But yeah, you can find them on Instagram and on Facebook.

C: Great, thank you so much.

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00:30:53,920 --> 00:30:59,260

C: think dots were coming up short on time.

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00:30:59,260 --> 00:31:09,320

C: But it was so nice meeting you and getting to interview you and hear about your amazing organizing efforts during these crazy times.

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00:31:09,320 --> 00:31:13,500

Y: But yes. Nice to meet you both, too, and I hope you all have a rest.

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00:31:13,500 --> 00:31:17,980

Y: All right. A great rest of your day. And same to you.

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00:31:17,980 --> 00:31:21,560

C: All right.

Y: All right.

C: Bye for now. All right.